



CD / LP

## JONAS JOHANSEN CHARMCATCHER

**Charms are caught in a moment, in THE moment. Jonas Johansen's Charmcatcher articulates these just captured moments of spontaneity, passion, and fluid form. A cohort of young Danish musicians inspired by Johansen come together to express their musical interactions with Indian audiences in their compositions with a flare of charisma, zest, and humility.**

The exchange between the East and West is not new and is certainly not specific to musical genres. The exchange is often (mis)understood as a melee of Eastern and Western instruments or a performance of Indian classical ragas via Western instrumentation. Johansen and his team redefine this global jazz raga exposition-genre by reinventing traditional raga music compositions and scales, and by providing the essence of human experiences encountered on the banks of the Ganges or the streets of Old Delhi through musical meditations and shifty reflections of rhythm and melody.

The fusion is not merely in the music, but

rather in the thought and performance that has shaped this album. The musicians traveled to India from Denmark to perform with their Indian classical music counterparts at schools, pilgrimage sites, and reputed music festivals. India and Europe come together not just in tracks, but in the intellectual and emotional seed of its creation.



One can compare the album to a stroll down a Victorian lane in South Mumbai—the apparatus is clearly Western and yet the experience is still strikingly Indian. Charmcatcher's temperament is very global, its essence is Indian. The bold audacity to soar beyond traditional classical scales, in between musical structures, and through barriers of form and narrative, present music

that reaches beyond labels and genres. It is the essence of the human musical experience—impossible to frame, predict, and emulate.

In many ways the album's music is a representation of early Indian intellectual and aesthetic treasures. Its core is not composed, it is created. Its core is not written, it is spoken. Its core is not described, it is experienced. Its core is not listened to, it is heard. Its core is not imagined, it is lived. Its core is not only present, it is absent. Its core is hard to place, it just is.

CHARMCATCHER, through its name and style, pays special tribute to the Rhythmic Music Conservatory (RMC) in Copenhagen, Denmark, where Johansen served as a faculty member and where he found critical resources and support to implement the educational and performative aspects of this project.

Imagine a conversation with a musical performer from the Mughal Courts in English. It's not the words or the grammar, but the intensity of his musical expression. Charmcatcher speaks to its critics in different languages and frameworks. It invites the listener for an exchange with the unheard and unimagined.



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1. On the Banks of the Ganges 9:09  
(Jonas Johansen)
2. Mirabai Bhajan 4:36  
(Devotional song by 16th century female saint)
3. Change of Time 8:02  
(Jonas Johansen)
4. The Flyover 9:39  
(Jonas Johansen)
5. Taa-Daa 8:53  
(Jonas Johansen)
6. Portrait 4:53  
(Jonas Johansen)
7. Digging 10:22  
(into the mysterious soul of a Woman)  
For Ann Kristin (Jonas Johansen)

Total time: 55:41

Kuba Wiecek Alto and soprano saxophones  
 Peter Sabroe Piano  
 Tobias Pfeil Guitars  
 Anders Fjeldsted Bass  
 Jonas Johansen Drums

Special appearances by  
 Abhijit Banarjee Tablas (tracks 2 and 4)  
 Jacob Andersen Bongos (track 4)

Track 4 and 6 does not appear on LP version.  
 Neither does special guest Jacob Andersen

## 1. On the Banks of the Ganges

Life is complicated. Now, imagine life for a man selling, trading, praying, or begging on the overpopulated banks of the Ganges in the holy city of Varanasi. The track traces the journey of life through its difficulties and sorrows. It also celebrates life's achievements and joys. In other words, it is a stroll on the banks of the Ganges—from one end to the other. Life, death, wealth, leprosy, burning corpses, bookstores, and poverty come together to welcome tourists into a moment of self-reflection. The quintuplet shuffle with metric modulations and the transferring into jazz make for a complicated follow. As complicated as life.

## 2. Mirabai Bhajan

Devotional folk songs in India outlive their authors, poets, and composers. They are markers of tradition and innovation in musical, literary, and religious circuits. Johansen and team fell in love with this traditional composition after learning it from famed tabla maestro Abhijit Banarjee. The Bhajan breathes a new spirit of life into its instrumentation—a drum set and a modern jazz saxophone. The composition takes on a new form but expresses all the emotions expected of a devotional song and those authored by the 16th century Rajasthani Queen-poetess and mystic Mirabai—separation, agony, pardon, intense desire, and eventual union.

## 3. Change of Time

The only thing certain about time is its unpredictable, dynamic form. Johansen asks the listener to travel through time with him—to brace oneself for the unexpected. This track displays an interesting rhythmic play in between 16th notes, quintuplets, sextuplets, and septuplets. The sudden slide to a 7/4 jazz is absorbed by a return to septuplets. The rhythmic dance highlights patterns present in South Indian or Carnatic compositions. It adds to the breadth of the album's musical palette. A benefit shaped by the composer's own reflections on expanding human repertoires brought on by fatherhood.

## 4. The Flyover

Flyovers or overhead highways and roadways mark the sophistication of an Indian city's infrastructure. It enables city-dwellers to skip a beat, to change pace, in otherwise unbearable traffic conditions. This track uses "anuloma" from the South Indian classical music system to shift gears between 1st, 2nd, and 3rd speeds. Traffic is an exercise in modulation recorded on set roads and flyovers. Life is an exercise in modulation recorded on pathways of passion and reason. To skip a beat, to change pace, guarantees yet another bearable commute, yet another chance to keep going. Another chance at life.

## 5. Taa-Daa

Life is lived, and Johansen's youngest daughter grows up, and has discovered self-representation. The statement is the question. She walks into the kitchen and presents herself to her loving father every morning—TAA DAA. The track is a representation of the human condition to seek in order to achieve and relish. Metric modulations of 7 are sheltered with sharp solos from the saxophone.

## 6. Portrait

We imagine ourselves as simple and accessible. Portraits are mere self-representations. We are painted and photographed in ways that we appreciate and recognize ourselves. Not so simple after all. A simple ballad song to let the listener step away from the complex stride of rhythm and pace.

## 7. Digging

(into the mysterious soul of a Woman)  
 Men love what they have found and what provides space for them to explore. For Johansen, understanding his dear wife is a journey, a life-long exploration and hobby. Navigating meters in the shifting subdivisions 4 and 5 is almost as complicating as exploring the mind, body, and soul of a mysterious partner. Johansen dedicates this song to the lifelong discovery of his wife as a husband, lover, and partner. New discoveries at every bend, after each rift. Love is digging into deeper, darker realms to find answers that we already may have.

## Yogi Trivedi

Adjunct Professor, Columbia University, NYC

Recorded 2016 at RMC studio A, Copenhagen Denmark by Tim Harris. Tablas recorded at Studio Vibrations, Kolkata, India by Goutam Basu and by Thor Madsen at Mazza Mansion. Bongos recorded at Bongo Enterprises by Jacob Andersen. Mixed by Tim Harris. Cover by Morten Agergaard. Photos by Ole Udengaard. Produced by Jonas Johansen.

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